

# City Council: 1. Normandy/Twining shoe-in & 2. Future Cambridge Development

Carol O'Hare <cbo1066@gmail.com>

Thu 5/14/2015 12:42 PM

City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>;

Cc: Rossi, Rich <rrossi@cambridgema.gov>; Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

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**From:** Carol O'Hare [mailto:cbo1066@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, May 14, 2015 12:40 PM

**To:** Cambridge City Council

**Cc:** Richard Rossi; Iram Farooq (ifarooq@cambridgema.gov)

**Subject:** City Council: 1. Normandy/Twining shoe-in & 2. Future Cambridge Development

Dear Mayor Maher, Vice Mayor Benzan and City Councillors:

## Normandy/Twining Residential Tower

What a deeply disheartening "process" this has been. It certainly seems like spot-zoning to classify this small, single-ownership area, within already base- and overlay-zoned Central Sq.: (a) for the exclusive benefit of a single developer and (b) inconsistently in major respects with the quietly shelved C2 plans and city-planning principles. Perpetually retained surface parking? >195 feet height abutting low-rise buildings? No wind-effect studies at the triangular intersection of two major city streets? Precedential model for other Central Sq. property owners? Drop-in-the-bucket, additional, affordable apartments?

The Twining/Normandy residential tower project has proceeded typically.\* Yes, there have been more developer/public meetings, classier presentations and "outreach." **But**, Normandy/Twining essentially followed the standard developer script: **I.** Ask for the moon > **II.** Withhold back-pocket goodies (additional affordable units) until the 11<sup>th</sup> hour > **III.** Congratulate everyone on reaching a fair and reasonable compromise. And, City officials and personnel acted accordingly.

**\*Examples:** The Planning Board's nominal and belated review occurred as a practical afterthought. The Council's dismissive handling of Councillor Carlone's alternative proposal, without even a nod to its substance. The ballyhooing of the affordable and middle income units when other developers have recently offered higher percentages.

## Future Development

I hope the future script won't be a re-play of the Normandy/Twining saga. Delay any City Master Plan and bypass a deliberative, productive Planning Board process for as long as possible while the City Council spot-zones our neighborhoods, parcel-by-parcel, developer-by-developer, to reach the then acceptable percentage of additional, affordable residential units? If so, woe is us!

Instead, how about speedy master planning with real (not token) public input opportunities and with a primary focus on (i) promoting affordable housing opportunities for those who have been or are likely to be forced out due to high rents, (ii) broad environmental and quality-of-life considerations, (iii) public transportation improvements and enhancement, (iv) use of City property and City funds (including funds derived from

increasing our shockingly low real estate tax rate and borrowings/bond issues, if necessary), (v) setting and meeting goals for updating and clarifying our Zoning Ordinance, (vi) fixing the CDD, ISD, Planning Board and the Board of Zoning Appeal practices and processes that effectively undercut or subvert our Zoning Ordinance, and (vii) **no more “spot-zonings” for the benefit of private property owners.**

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,  
Carol O'Hare  
172 Magazine St.

Cc: Donna Lopez, City Clerk: Please file this with the Official Record.

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